

ADDING FORTHRIGHTNESS TO PORTAGE CITY HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS

On August 10, 2023, concerned citizens met with Mayor Randall. The purpose of the meeting was to offer ideas to ensure citizens are informed earlier in the process of housing developments without having to rely on someone requesting something from the city or completing a FOIA request.

The 8/10 meeting with the mayor began with the citizens stating they believe:

- a) trust has been greatly eroded with how things were handled with Austin Landings and Woodbine housing development projects.
- b) “forthrightness” is inherent in the word transparency.
- c) forthrightness needs to be improved for city leaders to regain any level of trust with the citizens.

Two specific actions were requested for city leaders to take immediately to start reducing the distrust these specific projects have created:

1. **Apprise citizens of how their city personnel responded to a developer’s request.** The “city” is responding on behalf of its “citi”zens so let the citizens be informed. It is the responsible thing to do. The city website could have an opt in/out feature. This gives citizens visibility to what is being contemplated, well before the project hits the Planning Commission.
2. **Post on the City’s website simultaneous with posting required announcements in the Kalamazoo Gazette.** This allows citizens to be informed via a medium that is as prevalent now as a town’s newspaper was when the law was initiated. Citizens can opt in/out just as they can choose to/not to subscribe to a newspaper.

Mayor Randall agreed to discuss these recommendations with the City Manager. Here is the response from Patricia Randall on Aug 15,2023:

“I had a discussion with Pat McGinnis earlier today. The city will be taking steps to implement the suggestions you have made. His goal is to introduce this by mid September. He is researching any legal hurdles if a developer chooses to make something confidential. I will keep you apprised as this unfolds. We both agree that your requests are reasonable and will bring more transparency to the entire process.”